

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**LISTING OF CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-15 (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user and a second user over the Internet, the method comprising:

associating said first and second users ~~being associated~~ with a first realm and a second realm respectively, each said realm being accessible via the Internet using a protocol characteristic to said realm, each said user getting access to the Internet via one of a respective first and second device, at least one of said first and second devices having a storage media storing the protocol characteristic of the other realm; ~~the method comprising the steps of:~~

determining a current IP address of the second user;

establishing a connection between said first and second users using said current IP address and said protocol characteristic as part of an instant messaging session; and

encrypting, as between the devices, an instant message during the instant messaging session.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user is online.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said step of determining said current IP address comprises retrieving said address from an IM database.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising sending a connection request from the first to the second device for establishing said instant message session.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19 further comprising generating a response to said connection request by said second device accepting said connection request.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second devices, said window indicating a list of active users.

Claims 23 – 102 (Cancelled)

103. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22 further comprising displaying said window with a message area, said message area being used to indicate messages between said users.

104. (Cancelled)

105. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

106. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

107. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

108. (Previously Presented) A method of conducting an instant messaging session, the method comprising:

establishing an instant messaging session over an Internet protocol network between a first user device and a second user device, each said user device corresponding to a user name, each said user name corresponding to a different realm, each said user device having an Internet protocol address in the realm corresponding to the user name; and

encrypting, as between the devices, communications in the instant messaging session.

109. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

110. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

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111. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

112. (Previously Presented) A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user and a second user over the Internet,

the method comprising the steps of:

retrieving an instant messaging protocol suitable for communications with said second user from a database accessible to the first user;

and

establishing a connection from said first user to said second user using instant messaging protocol as part of an instant messaging session.

113. (Previously Presented) A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user and a second user over the Internet,

the method comprising the steps of:

retrieving one of a plurality of instant messaging protocols, the one instant messaging protocol being suitable for communications with said second user from a database accessible to the first user;

and

displaying an instant message from said first user to said second user using instant messaging protocol.

114. (Previously Presented) An instant message receiving system, said system including:

a first user device connected to an Internet Protocol network and associated with a first Internet Protocol address, a first user name, and a first realm; and

a second user device connected to said Internet Protocol network and associated with a second Internet Protocol address, a second user name, and a second realm wherein said second user device receives a key-encrypted instant message from said first user device.

115. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

116. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

117. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

118. (Previously Presented) A method for receiving an instant message, said method including:

transmitting an instant message from a first user device connected to an Internet Protocol network and associated with a first Internet Protocol address, a first user name, and a first realm; and

receiving said instant message at a second user device connected to said Internet Protocol network and associated with a second Internet Protocol address, a second user

name, and a second realm; wherein the instant message is encrypted as between the user devices.

119. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

120. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

121. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

122. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114 wherein said first realm employs a first protocol characteristic, said second realm employs a second protocol characteristic, and wherein said first protocol characteristic is different from said second protocol characteristic.

123. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user device is online.

124. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second user device, said window indicating a list of active user devices.

125. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118 wherein said first realm has a protocol and said second realm has a protocol, said protocols being different.

126. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user device is online.

127. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second user devices, said window indicating a list of active user devices.

128. (Previously Presented) System for instant messaging, the system including:  
a first Internet service provider;  
a second Internet service provider;  
a user name associated with the first Internet service provider; and  
a second user name associated with the second Internet service provider;



wherein each said user name corresponds to a respective device enabled to conduct an instant messaging session over the Internet, said instant messaging session being encrypted as between the devices.

129. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein the devices are enabled by a prior communication of an encryption key.

130. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein the instant messaging session is facilitated by forming a relay connection.

131. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein the instant messaging forming a peer-to-peer connection.

132. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers comprises a portal instant messaging provider.

133. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers comprises a general instant messaging provider.

134. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein the instant messaging session is facilitated by forming a relay connection.

135. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein the instant messaging forming a peer-to-peer connection.

136. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein the Internet service providers comprise portal instant messaging providers.

137. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein the Internet service providers comprise general instant messaging providers.

138. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

139. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

140. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

141. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

142. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

143. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

144. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, further including:  
a third Internet service provider; and  
a third user device associated with a user name at the third Internet service provider,

wherein the third user device participates in the instant messaging session, the session being encrypted as between the devices.

145. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 128, wherein the first device ~~provides~~ displays a friends list including the Internet service provider of the second user and a user name of the second user and the Internet service provider of the third user and the user name of the third user.

146. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein the first user device retrieves an instant messaging protocol suitable for communications with said second user device from a database accessible to the first user device.

147. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers provides Internet telephone service.

148. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 112, wherein said establishing a connection includes establishing a connection with an Internet service provider that provides Internet telephone service.

149. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said realms comprise Internet service providers.

150. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 112, further including encrypting the instant messaging session, as between a user device of the first user and a user device of the second user.

151. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 113, further including encrypting the instant messaging session, as between a user device of the first user and a user device of the second user.